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TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 645 - SEPTEMBER 8, 1978

LONDON FOR GLASPIE
PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. ISRAEL-SYRIA. THE ISRAELIS ARE CONCERNED THAT THE SYRIANS MAY TRY TO ENGAGE ISRAELI RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT OVER LEBANON. THIS CONCERN APPARENTLY DERIVES FROM RECENT SYRIAN ANTI-AIRCRAFT ACTIVITIES THERE. THE ISRAELIS NORMALLY ARE ACCUSTOMED TO OVERFLYING LEBANESE TERRITORY AT WILL AND, DESPITE THE INCREASED RISKS AND CONSEQUENCES OF A CLASH WITH THE SYRIANS, PROBABLY INTEND TO CONTINUE THEIR RECONNAISSANCE MISSIONS OVER LEBANON.

2. SYRIA'S RECENT DEPLOYMENT TO LEBANON OF 80 TO 100 ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS HAS INCREASED THIS POTENTIAL FOR A MAJOR CLASH. (RECENT REPORTS OF SYRIAN SAM-6 MISSILES MOVING INTO LEBANON REMAIN UNCONFIRMED.) THE REINFORCED ANTI-AIRCRAFT ARTILLERY IS CLUSTERED AROUND TWO AIRFIELDS, FAIRLY REMOTE FROM RECENT CONFRONTATIONS, AND MAY BE PREPARATORY TO THE STATIONING OF SYRIAN AIRCRAFT AT THESE FIELDS.

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3. ASSAD MAY BE TRYING TO SHOW THE ISRAELIS THAT HE WILL NOT BE DISSUADED FROM WHITTILING AWAY AT THE CHRISTIAN POSITIONS AROUND BEIRUT AND THAT HE WILL NOT LET ISRAEL INTERFERE IN INTERNAL ARAB AFFAIRS. THE LAST TIME THE SYRIANS ATTEMPTED A SURPRISE ATTACK ON ISRAEL PLANES -- IN SEPTEMBER 1973 -- THE ISRAELIS SHOT DOWN 13 SYRIAN MIG 21 AIRCRAFT. (SECRET)

4. ISRAEL. EMBASSY TEL AVIV REPORTS THAT THE LOOSE ENDS OF THE MORIBUND DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE (DMC) ARE ALL BUT WRAPPED UP WITH THE AGREEMENT OF AMNON RUBENSTEIN'S SHINUI FACTION AND A SMALLER GROUP, LED BY TRANSPORTATION MINISTER AMIT, TO MERGE INTO A NEW PARTY CONTROLLING SEVEN OF THE 15 DMC KNESSET SEATS. SEVEN DMC SEATS BELONG TO THE RUMP DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT AND THE 15TH DMC MEMBER, ASSAF YAGURI, HAS DECIDED TO FORM A SEPARATE FACTION. AMIT RECENTLY TOLD THE EMBASSY THAT "ONLY A MIRACLE" AT CAMP DAVID COULD PERSUADE HIM TO STAY WITH THE GOVERNMENT, IMPLYING THAT AN AGREEMENT ONLY TO CONTINUE NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT ADDRESSING FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS WOULD BE INSUFFICIENT.

5. THE EMBASSY ALSO REPORTS THAT THE QUESTION OF PUBLIC SECTOR WAGE INCREASES IS THE MAJOR ISSUE ON THE ISRAELI LABOR SCENE. THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO HOLD TO A 15 PERCENT INCREASE ON TOP OF A COST OF LIVING FORMULA. SIXTY THOUSAND ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS HAVE CALLED FOR A STRIKE ON SEPTEMBER 11 DEMANDING A 35 PERCENT INCREASE. OTHER PUBLIC EMPLOYEES ARE GRUMBLING AND DISCUSSING SLOWDOWNS. THE EMBASSY SAYS THAT A GOVERNMENT CAPITULATION TO TEACHERS' DEMANDS WOULD HAVE SERIOUS EFFECTS ON THE ECONOMY BUT THE FINANCE MINISTRY THINKS THE GOVERNMENT CAN PREVAIL OVER THE ECONOMICALLY WEAK TEACHERS' UNION. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE) CHRISTOPHER

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